



From the NIFA Communications Office

NIFA in the News – Week of August 1, 2011

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In the News

AgriLife Extension to address effect of climate change on animal agriculture (Sun Belt Ag Net 7/20). The Texas AgriLife Extension Service will share a \$4.1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture with five other land-grant university extension agencies to address issues associated with climate change and animal agriculture. [Link](#)

Disease Management Research Focused on Improving Sustainability (Illinois Soybean Association 7/24). The University of Illinois (UI) Department of Crop Sciences is part of a team representing 18 institutions that has been awarded a \$9.28 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. This team is focused on developing new disease management technologies to improve the sustainability of soybean production. Their research will benefit Illinois soybean producers and help develop better management practices. [Link](#)

Meet Our Food Heroes (Enviromedia Social Marketing 7/27). "We must no longer be known as 'the best kept secret.'" That's what USDA's Dr. Cynthia Reeves Tuttle told a roomful of about 100 food and nutrition extension agents in Kansas City this weekend. So, I thought I'd do my part and write a blog about the group. These extension agents were in town with about 500 nutrition-world colleagues for the annual conference of the Society for Nutrition Education. I was there to present a case study on our "Food Hero" work with the Oregon State University Extension Service, as part of a day-long Food and Nutrition Extension Education Workshop. USDA works with thousands of county and regional offices that are tied to more than 100 land-grant colleges and universities, like OSU and Texas A&M. Dr. Reeves Tuttle's USDA program, Health and Wellness, represents the federal arm of a trifecta grant partnership with state and local government to provide an array of education and services — from parenting and food safety to diabetes management and nutrition classes. [Link](#)

ED and USDA Promote the Value in Rural Partnerships (ED Blog 7/27). Land-grant university Cooperative Extension Services can be valuable partners for rural schools, particularly in distant and remote areas where other partnerships are hard to come by. During a recent webinar, School Improvement Grant (SIG) administrators in state education departments learned more about how the National 4-H and Cooperative Extension programs supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture can help with the national effort to turnaround low-performing schools and end the dropout crisis. [Link](#)

Subcommittee examines USDA research programs (Cattle Network 7/28). This week Rep. Timothy V. Johnson (R-Ill.), Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee's Subcommittee on Rural Development, Research, Biotechnology, and Foreign Agriculture, held an audit hearing to examine USDA research programs. This is the ninth hearing in the audit series that is designed to provide members of the committee with a greater understanding of farm policy. [Link](#)

Boost ag research funding or else (Its not pretty) (Dairy Herd Network 7/29). “Here’s the bottom line, Mr. and Mrs. Congressman, unless there is more money appropriated for agricultural research, there will have to be more land, labor, capital, and inputs brought into production.” USDA’s Economic Research Service laid it out very clear, and said ag research spending has to keep up with or exceed the rate of inflation to supply enough food to meet the demand. (You can’t get much clearer than that.) [Link](#)

House Holds Hearing on USDA Research Programs (National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition 7/29). On Thursday, July 28, the House Agriculture Committee’s Subcommittee on Rural Development, Research, Biotechnology, and Foreign Agriculture held an audit hearing on federal research programs administered by USDA. This was the ninth hearing on farm bill programs the Committee has held this year. [Link](#)

For 4-H, ‘It’s a big deal’ (Lincoln Courier 7/30). There is a common misconception about 4-H, and Amy Hyde, a community worker involved with 4-H and youth programs at the Logan County Extension, has noticed it. “A lot of people think of livestock (when they think of 4-H),” Hyde said. But 4-H — which stands for head, heart, hands and health — is much more. The youth organization, which developed in the United States around 1902, is administered through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture of the USDA, and though it’s been typically thought of as an agriculturally focused organization, over the years it has expanded its focus to citizenship, healthy living, science, engineering and technology. [Link](#)

Cornell's CITIZEN U to support at-risk youth (Ithaca Journal 7/31). A new program called CITIZEN U will support at-risk youth, help them become active citizens in their communities, and encourage them to graduate from high school and

go on to college. The program, funded by a five-year grant of \$660,000, is a joint effort between Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Cornell University College of Human Ecology. The program is funded by the Children, Youth and Families at Risk Program at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. [Link](#)

Farmer-friendly programs fight drought (San Angelo Standard-Times 7/31).

Agricultural researchers at Texas Tech University have released two new farmer-friendly computer tools to help battle the state's prolonged and brutal drought. The new programs — developed to target the needs of irrigation farmers in the West Texas and Panhandle regions — will save scarce irrigation water and boost bottom lines for parched producers. A \$4.1 million grant from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture will be shared with five land grant university Extension agencies and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service. The research grant will address issues associated with climate change and animal agriculture. [Link](#)

Plant Infection Demystified (Laboratory Equipment 8/1). Researchers from the Virginia Bioinformatics Institute (VBI) at Virginia Tech and a team of international colleagues have identified the functions of a large family of virulence proteins used by a dangerous group of plant pathogens that includes the soybean pathogen *Phytophthora sojae* and the Irish potato famine pathogen, *Phytophthora infestans*. This research is featured in the plant research journal *The Plant Cell*. The research was supported by funding from the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative of the United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, the US National Science Foundation, and by several grants to Wang and Shan from the Government of China, including an international cooperation grant. [Link](#)

Urban Design Lab Wins Grant to Study Northeast Regional Food Systems (The Earth Institute 8/1). The Urban Design Lab (UDL), in collaboration with eight other institutions and the United States Department of Agriculture, has been awarded a \$5 million, five-year Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) competitive grant (AFRI) from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The project is titled "Enhancing Food Security in the Northeast With Regional Food Systems." NIFA identifies Global Food Security as one of its five societal challenge areas, which also include Childhood Obesity Prevention, Climate Change, Food Safety and Sustainable Bioenergy. [Link](#)

People's Garden Grant Program (Columbia Land Conservancy 8/1). People's Garden Grant Program is a joint initiative supported by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Food and Nutrition Service, Forest Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service, and is being administered by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). Funds from the People's Garden Grant Program will be used to facilitate the creation of produce, recreation, and/or wildlife gardens in urban and rural areas, which will provide opportunities for science-based informal education. [Link](#)

Importance of ag research stressed at hearings (Ag Info Net 8/1). A U.S. House

Agriculture Subcommittee held a hearing last week on USDA agricultural research. The next farm bill may have less money for research, however Dr. Laurian Unnevehr, Acting Administrator of the Economic Research Service, told lawmakers a new study says that by 2050 global demand for food will increase 70 to 100% so ag productivity is going to have to increase that much, however; Unnevehr: "Simulations indicate that if support for U.S. public agricultural research remains constant at current nominal levels, then productivity growth will fall and output will only increase by 40% by 2050, falling short of future demand." [Link](#)

Virginia Tech leads study to improve food security in southern Appalachia (EurekAlert 8/2). While the popularity of locally and regionally grown food is on the rise among Americans, food accessibility remains a major concern for those with limited financial resources. Virginia Tech's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences is collaborating with West Virginia University and North Carolina State University to develop, implement, and evaluate a food security strategy to enhance the resiliency of the Southern Appalachian region, with a special focus on local food access and affordability for low-income populations. The three-year, \$2 million study is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, through the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative. Projects funded through this program explore ways to help disadvantaged communities in urban and rural areas establish sustainable food systems. [Link](#)

USDA research programs reviewed (Western Farm Press 8/3). The House Agriculture Committee's Subcommittee on Rural Development, Research, Biotechnology, and Foreign Agriculture, chaired by Rep. Johnson, R-Ill., conducted a hearing to review USDA's research programs. USDA witnesses included Dr. Edward B. Knippling, administrator, Agricultural Research Service; Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young, acting director, National Institute of Food and Agriculture; Dr. Cynthia Clark, administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service; and Dr. Laurian Unnevehr, acting administrator, Economic Research Service. [Link](#)

Schools work to boost Appalachian food access (WBTB 8/3). Agricultural researchers are working to develop strategies to make locally grown and produced food more accessible and affordable for southern Appalachian residents. Virginia Tech's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, along with experts from North Carolina State and West Virginia universities, are studying how to reverse a lack of healthy, fresh food choices for the region's low-income families. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture is funding the 3-year, \$2 million effort. [Link](#)

USDA scientists study effects of rising carbon dioxide on rangelands (Cattle Network 8/3). Rising carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels can reverse the drying effects of predicted higher temperatures on semi-arid rangelands, according to a study published today in the scientific journal *Nature* by a team of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and university scientists. In addition to ARS funding, the research is supported by grants from the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of

Energy, and USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. [Link](#)

NC State to get \$25M as hub of food illness fight (AP 8/3). North Carolina State University is getting \$25 million over five years to lead efforts to reduce the number of food-borne illnesses caused by a family of viruses that can spread quickly and easily. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is leading the effort. The project to be announced Wednesday looks to control food contamination by noroviruses and reduce the number of illnesses throughout the U.S. commercial food chain. USDA chief scientist Catherine Woteki says the project will develop methods that will be adopted by the food industry. [Link](#)

NCSU gets federal grant to study food poisoning (News Observer-NC 8/3). A national team led by N.C. State University has received a \$25 million federal grant to research and help control the viruses that cause food poisoning. The money, to be disbursed over five years, will establish the NCSU-based Food Virology Collaborative, an institute dedicated to studying and preventing food-borne viruses, such as noroviruses. These viruses are the most common cause of food poisoning. Most who fall ill because of a norovirus recover on their own, but those with severe cases sometimes need hospitalization. The grant is the largest ever awarded for food safety by the USDA's National Institute for Food and Agriculture. [Link](#)

NC State to get \$25M as hub of food illness fight (Washington Examiner – 8/3). North Carolina State University will receive \$25 million over five years to lead a U.S. Agriculture Department effort to cut down the number of food-borne illnesses caused by a family of viruses that can spread quickly and easily. The project scheduled to be announced Wednesday aims to control food contamination by noroviruses and reduce the number of illnesses throughout the U.S. commercial food chain, especially in ready-to-eat products that may not be washed or cooked before consumption, said Catherine Woteki, USDA's chief scientist. [Link](#)

Simple strategies to combat obesity (Philadelphia Inquirer 8/4). Jennifer Orlet Fisher of Temple University and a colleague from Virginia Tech will spend \$3.7 million over the next five years answering that question. Fisher, who heads the Family Eating Lab at the Center for Obesity Research and Education at Temple University, and Elena Serrano of Virginia Tech received a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture in March and are poised to recruit participants for their study. Their project, as yet unnamed, aims to prevent obesity among low-income preschoolers - who are especially vulnerable - by giving mothers simple strategies to promote appropriate food choices and portion sizes. [Link](#)

USDA Funds Norovirus Study (Food Safety News 8/4). North Carolina State University (NCSU) has received a \$25 million federal grant to study how human noroviruses are transmitted and survive in food, with a goal of finding better ways to control them and reduce the number of foodborne illnesses they cause. The grant was announced Wednesday by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack at the annual conference of the International Association for Food Protection in Milwaukee. [Link](#)

USDA NIFA awards NC State \$25M grant to study human noroviruses (News Medical 8/4). North Carolina State University will use a \$25 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to strengthen food safety by studying human noroviruses across the food supply chain in an effort to design effective control measures and reduce the number of virus-caused food-borne illnesses. [Link](#)

SDSU research envisions crude oil from switchgrass (Mitchell Daily Republic 8/4). A new study by SDSU researchers working with a U.S. Department of Agriculture colleague explores how to get the most from such a production system. The USDA is funding the project with a grant of \$1 million — \$200,000 annually for the next five years — to help scientists design a feedstock production system for optimum energy production of “bio-oil,” but also to explore the possible ecological benefits from the use of biochar. The grant was selected by the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s flagship competitive grants program called AFRI, or the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative. [Link](#)

Clemson University receives \$2.4 million to study cause of food-borne illness (Anderson Independent Mail 8/4). Clemson University has received the first year of funding of a five-year \$2.43 million grant to study human noroviruses, the most common cause of food-borne disease. The grant is from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Clemson is among more than 30 collaborators in the study that are sharing in \$24.8 million from the Department of Agriculture. North Carolina State University is the lead institution for the collaborative. [Link](#)

Study to examine nitrogen efficiency (Capital Press 8/4). David Brown is studying how to make wheat use nitrogen and water more efficiently. In the process, he hopes to reduce the amount of nitrous oxide, a major greenhouse gas, that goes into the atmosphere. Brown, an associate professor at Washington State University's Department of Crop and Soil Sciences, leads a study that recently received a \$4.5 million five-year grant from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture through the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative. [Link](#)

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